DOT Network will get upgraded continuously through induction of advanced technologies and equipment.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Full capacity utilisation in Barauni and Bongaigaon Refineries

*687. SHRIMATI CHANDRIKA ABHINANDAN JAIN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Barauni and Bongaigaon Refineries are working below their installed capacity because of shortage of crude oil supply to their plants;

(b) whether it is also a fact that with the coming up of a new refinery at Numaligarh in Assam, these refineries are going to face a further crude oil crisis; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to see that the plants work to their full capacity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH SHARMA): (a) The crude oil production North-Eastern region during 1994-95 was about 5.08 million tonnes. The combined refining capacity of four refineries namely, Digboi, Guwahati, Bongaigaon Refineries & Petrochemicals Ltd. and Barauni is 6.15 million tonnes per annum. Capacity utilization of Barauni and BRPL Refineries are 67% and 87% respectively for 1994-95.

(b) and (c) The Numaligarh Refinery is not likely to affect the availablity of crude oil to Barauni and Bongaigaon Refineries. To increase the crude production in North-Eastern Region and to enhance crude availability, Government has already drawn up short-term and long-term measures. The proposal of IOC for laying a crude oil pipeline from Haldia to Barauni to augment the crude supplies to Barauni Refinery is also under process for investment approvals.

Prime Minister's visit to Maldives

*688. SHRI SYED SUBTEY RAZI: SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister visited Maldives in the recent past;

(b) if so, the details thereof, with objectives;

(c) whether this visit of the Prime Minister would pave the way for further strengthening of bilateral ties between the two countries;

(d) whether the Prime Minister had offered technical and training assistance to Maldives in a number of fields like defence, environment, medical, non-conventional energy, marine transport etc;

(e) if so, the details thereof, with the reaction of Government of Maldives;

(f) whether the Prime Minister propose to pay visit to other neighbouring countries in future, to further strengthen the ties with such countries; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R.L. BHATIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Prime Minister paid a one-day visit to Maldives on April 15-16, 1995 to inaugurate the 200-bed Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Male, constructed with Government of India's assistance.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. Technical, educational and training assistance in the fields of environment, medical, para-medical, distance education, sports, non-conventional energy and vocational training in various areas such as computers, nursery teachers and secretarial assistance, etc. were offered as a continuation of our on going bilateral cooperation programme with the Maldives.

(f) and (g) PM has accepted in principle an invitation from Prime Minister of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia to visit Bangladesh. Mutually convenient dates have to be worked out through diplomatic channels.